



NEWS RELEASE

IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD

The Idaho Water Center, 322 E. Front St., Boise ID -- Phone: (208) 287-4800 FAX: (208) 287-6700
www.idwr.idaho.gov

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For Media Information Contact:
Bob McLaughlin – 208-287-4828

Idaho Water Resource Board Completes the Purchase of Pristine Springs Fish Farm near Twin Falls

During the month of April, the Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) in a partnership with the city of Twin Falls, North Snake and Magic Valley ground water districts, completed a series of transactions resulting in the purchase of Pristine Springs fish farm operation. The transactions are designed to address conflicts between spring water users and ground water users in Magic Valley as well as provide the city of Twin Falls with a fresh water source to improve the quality of its water supply and provide for future growth of the city.

The acquisition of Pristine Springs provides ground water users with replacement water to address the Blue Lakes Trout Farm delivery call by making available 10 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water for mitigating ground water user's depletions on spring flows at the Blue Lakes trout facility. The acquisition provides for a permanent solution to one of the water calls and keeps farmland in production that would have been dried up. The water districts will pay \$11 million in total, \$1 million initially plus \$10 million and interest for 10 years as part of a loan from the IWRB. The IWRB will eventually have the \$10 million plus interest returned to its revolving loan program which will be used to finance other water projects across the state.

The water provided by the water districts will avoid the need to curtail as many as 30,000 acres of ground water irrigated farmland thereby avoiding an estimated economic impact of \$80 million to \$100 million to the region.

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The purchase also avoids potential water delivery calls from Pristine Springs and the city of Twin Falls. In addition, the acquisition resolves a lawsuit between the Department of Environmental Quality and the former owner of Pristine Springs concerning the amount of effluent returned to the Snake River by the fish farm operation.

The city of Twin Falls benefits from the plan and will contribute \$10 million to acquire a clean water source in order to comply with federal water quality standards. The alternative for the city was to build a \$33 million water treatment facility. The city will also have use of additional spring water to meet future growth.

Included in the acquisition of the Pristine Springs are two hydropower facilities that will generate approximately \$100,000 per year under current agreements with Idaho Power. That revenue, in excess of operating costs, will be returned to the IWRB revolving loan program.

As part of the agreement, IWRB will lease the property back to the current owner to continue some fish farming operations for at least the next two years. The funds gained from the lease will further reduce the Board's purchase price.

In addition to the numerous water supply benefits of the transaction, the State will own water rights for more than 200 cfs of water, 400 acres of prime river front property (including 200 irrigated acres), fish hatchery and hydropower facilities, and other buildings on the property. The \$5 million in funding contributed by the Board is the result of an appropriation to the IWRB by the Idaho Legislature in 2006 to acquire water and facilities to help resolve water conflicts in the Thousand Springs area.

The deal resulted from the leadership of Governor Otter, Speaker Denney, Pro-Tem Geddes, Co-Chairmen of JFAC, Senator Dean Cameron and Representative Maxine Bell and the Idaho Water Resource Board. The acquisition was approved by the Joint Appropriation Finance Committee on March 12, 2008 by a 20 to 0 vote. It was also unanimously approved by the IWRB on March 14, 2008.

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Media Advisory:

The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) will hold its regularly scheduled meeting in the Twin Falls area May 8 & 9. As part of the Boards working session on the afternoon of May 8, a tour of will be conducted of the Pristine Springs facility for Board members and partners in the Pristine Springs acquisition.

Pristine Springs is an operational aquaculture, hydropower and cattle ranching operation with allot of activity, heavy equipment use, and access roads that are single lane, gravel and narrow with steep drop offs. Safety is a major concern regarding a tour of the facility and it is very important to keep the number of vehicles and people to a minimum.

However the Board does want to provide an opportunity for the media to view the facility. To accommodate the media, a tour of the facility will be offered on the morning of May 8th prior to the afternoon tour for Board members. IWRB will try to accommodate as many members of the media as possible, but the number of tour participants could be limited depending on response.

Please respond before May 2nd to reserve a spot on the media tour of the facility on a first come first served basis. This will also help us plan for parking and transportation arrangements. If you are a member of the media that would like to tour the Pristine Springs facility, please contact Bob McLaughlin, Public Information Officer, Idaho Department of Water Resources at (208)-287-4828 Mon-Fri between 8am to 5pm or via e-mail at bob.mclaughlin@idwr.idaho.gov before May 2nd.